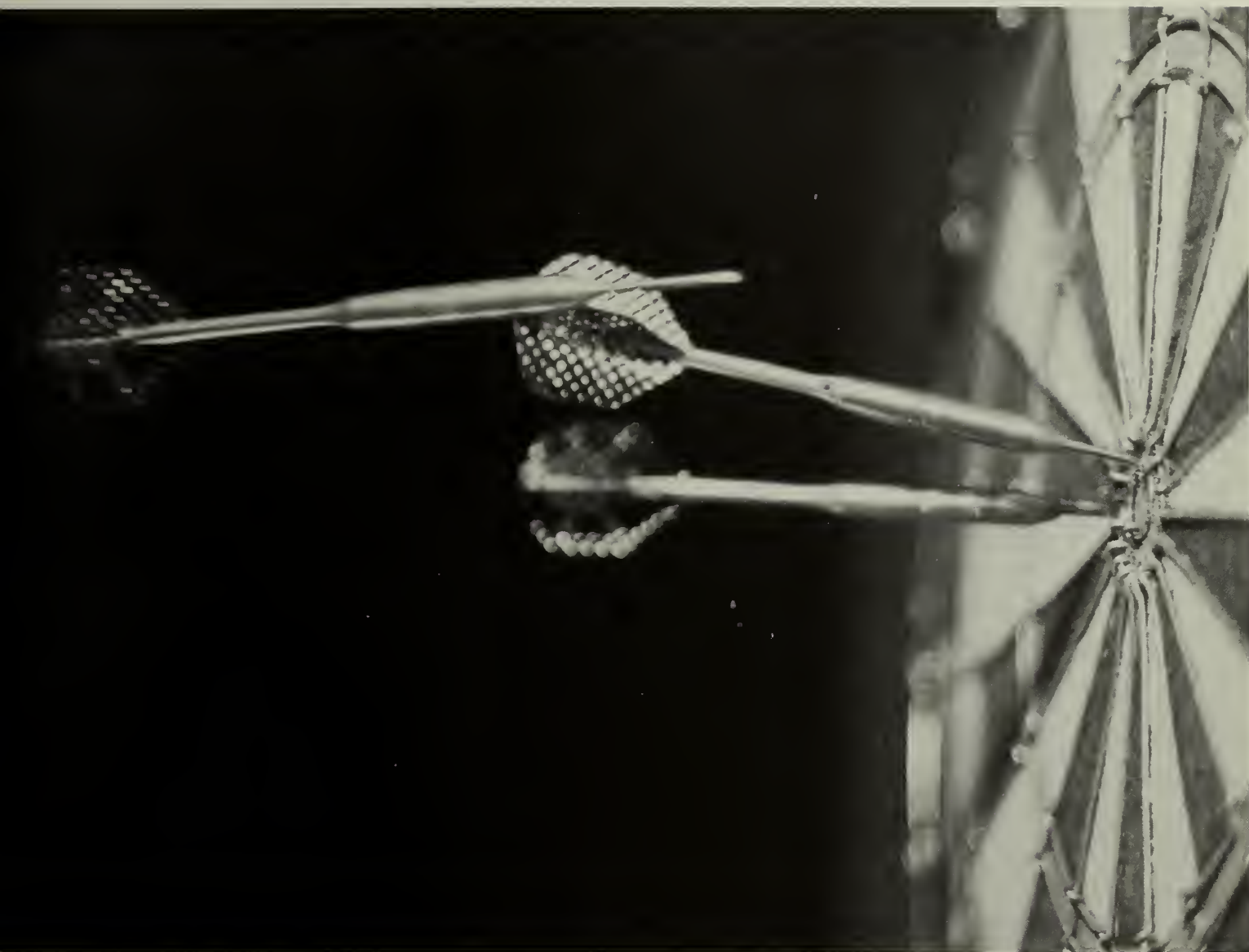


THE MIRROR



Fall 1988

Table of Contents

<i>Desert</i> , Lisa Levy.....	Page 3
Kristin Humphries.....	Page 4
<i>Believing Blue</i> , Mimi Maltagliati.....	Page 5
<i>Under San Francisco</i> , Caitlin Anderson.....	Page 6
Melissa Brown.....	Page 6
<i>Within an Unheard Rhythm</i> , Sarah Burgess.....	Page 7
<i>Dawn</i> , Sasha Gray.....	Page 8
<i>Photo</i> , Tanya Rulon-Miller.....	Page 9
<i>Me and The Three Point Line</i> , James McLain.....	Page 10
<i>Grapefruit</i> , Mari Fetzer.....	Page 12
<i>Photo</i> , Justin Van Wart.....	Page 14
<i>Spoils...</i> , Atticus Lish.....	Page 15
The View From '92, an introduction.....	Page 19
<i>Drawing</i> , Melissa Brown.....	Page 19
<i>Journey</i> , Margaret Litvin.....	Page 20
<i>The Spectre</i> , Doug Kern.....	Page 21
<i>Photo</i> , Justin Van Wart.....	Page 23
<i>No One Hears Now</i> , Paul Lisiak.....	Page 24
Special Patrons.....	Page 25
Staff.....	Page 26



Cover Picture, Justin Van Wart

An Interview with Mr. Maquebela
will appear in the next issue of the *Mirror*

This place is a dust reminder of the people we forgot. Ghosts of stone and ancient clay in an ancient shadow play, awkward in its loneliness the stone calls out to us, silent voice of those whom time buried in layers of earth. Life here is dust, in the colors of the heat that bakes civilizations into shards of history. A wayward path of their lives and ours, a junction as deep and endless as the penetrating well.

The heat parches the rocks but they stand firm and strong, proud of their long heritage and oblivious to us. Plants are affirmative: the desert is alive. Protected by the staunch rocks, the ground sleeps -- cool, smooth pebbles of even shadow-moist clay. Looming cliffs are ruffled like the hem of a towering skirt, folds permanent and frozen into unchanging waves. Sand smooths the angles, forming gentle slopes, grain by grain into curvacious mounds. The sky is bright behind it all and seems to cast no shadows. Whatever shade is bequeathed upon us is quickly drained by the ever-thirsty ground, in secret as if embarrassed of its own barren futility.

And always the colors: Red rocks stained with the blood of the earth, bleached dry by sun and yellowed by the fire of the land, distorted colorations of a world that should be as white as the center-essence of the hottest flame.

Are you sometimes there? I was, once--

At night, climbing upward. The dawn is hovering in the violet blue air and a sliver of light shines brilliant white above us. The sun is preparing to ascend and behind us the horizon blushes exultantly, all shades of warmth, intense in celebration. The basin below us fades into gradual shapes of endless perspective, flat and receiving, then the cliffs slope around us, curving upward into a protective rim, chiseled and carved out eloquently by time. Above the most remote cliffs glitter a tiny patch of city lights like fairy dust sprinkled into a pocket of earth.

Now the sun is quickly rising and we watch from above, on our summit plateau. In the overpowering light the mountains below dim and blur. The air grows warmer but it is still cool and fresh and we all glow in the newness of this morning light. The mauves and tans and desert softs blend remote in deepening lavender violet earth, the faded wash of desert chalks, and behind them the sky still waits.

Now the sun is level with us and we sit, watching the mountains capped with light, bathed in glow,

made newer and more alive and always endless. Far below the sand dunes are gently peaking, turning to greet the sun. The scattered slopes still change colors, responding to the shades of light. Strange grooved paths twist through the ground forming islands, the trail of a giant finger aimlessly tracing its sensuous mind into the sand, child's play in this waterless beach. But we are small and watching from far far above and we cannot see the distant source of these snakes, nor the finger of creation.

Now everything is sharp and distinct and defined; fresh morning replaces the hazy dawn, and the day is yet untainted by yellow heat, shadowed and sculpted into clarity by these rays. All around us is this entity of silence, colors, shapes, textures, stones outlined in sun. Now is real and nothing was real before.

But even then I knew the "now" was transient. NOW is real; far away from sunrise and earth, and here, creating a new reality with words. I try to carry the desert within me, but the space inside is being quickly filled with names and dates and times and many words.

There is no more desert emptiness.

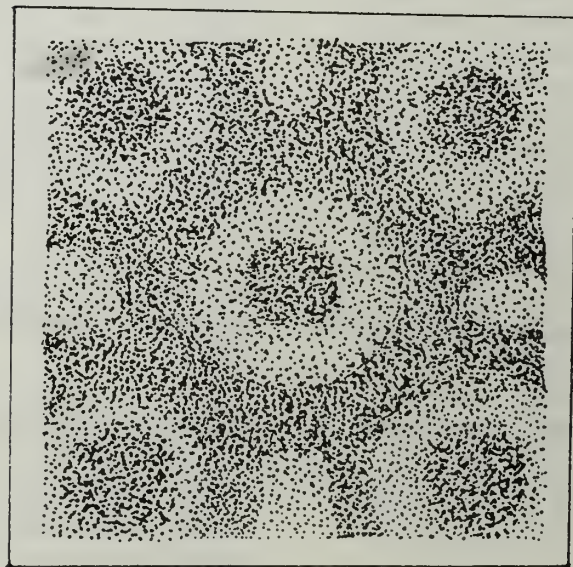
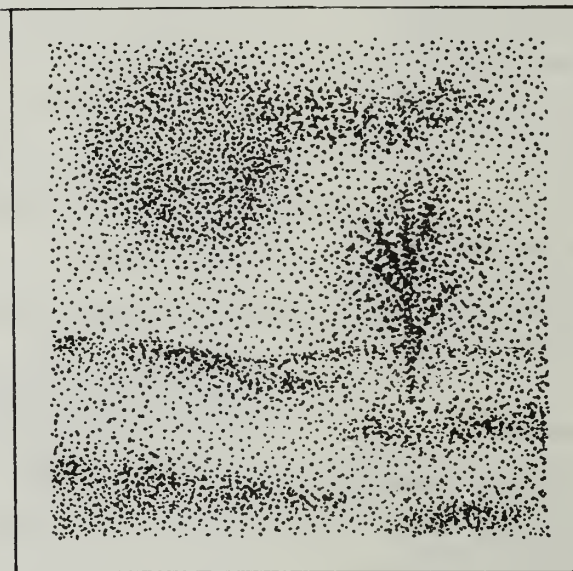
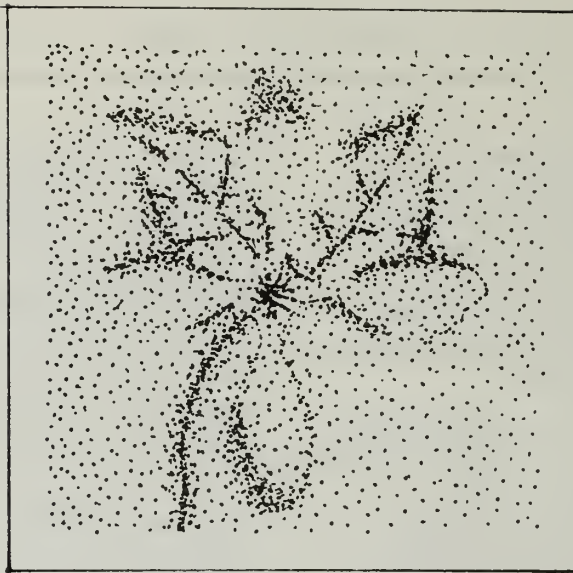
But this new reality is important, it moves and changes, and the desert slips into its ordered, measured, rented cubicle as a lonely vagueness, that had no room to expand in the mind of study.

But I know I felt the desert. I saw myself in every rock. But tonight! Nothing ever was or ever will be like the desert when the sun moves over the vast expanse. Nothing will ever express or describe the light and shadow and openness and emptiness and fullness, crevices and delicate arches and somber black of gaping caves, the strange and eerie shapes of cliffs--some crowns, some temples and domes and monoliths. This IS total sculpture--the DESERT is the ultimate sculpture, carved into existence by forces too powerful for us to comprehend.

How can it compete with filling in the bubbles! I might forget my number two pencil, because coexistence is impossible--one MUST encompass the other.

AND so I must push it all into the back shelf, where it will gather dust--

A dust reminder of the ghosts of stone I left to antiquity while I chased books and papers in a timeless cyclic search.



Believing Blue

So it starts.
I sit down
nightly.
It's relatively empty,
just a plethora of blue seats.
that rattle and clank over the bumps.
And I'm tired and I don't know anyone
and the blue turns into an unknown friend.
Voices are striving to be heard
while yearning to be inaudible to all
except to the one close enough to hear
the one that will exchange
the only one that cares.
And I'm trying to look inconspicuous
even though I'm invading
and I know it.

Two ladies
- *when I go out I don't like to tie myself
down to just one man. I like to keep my
options open- if I dance one song with a
guy it doesn't mean he owns me for the
night.*

Under her breast a young girl
maybe six years old
plastic shoes and plastic bow shaped
barettes
colored blue and yellow that grace the
ends
of two twiny braids.
The mother is wearing a see-through blouse
nobody is looking
yet everybody notices.

- *Call me ...we'll get together*
- *What's your number?*
- *234-5565 (loudly)*

not discrete or anything
men start to jot it down thinking:
"she keeps her options open."

Two seats over
he talks to himself
mumbling

- *nobody talks to my mama that way and
gets away with it.*

stare...stare...
I see you looking
smiling, controlling
don't look over
don't acknowledge
that's what he wants
wrapped up
in his army jacket.

Listening somewhere else

Two white men:
- *Yunh, what did you say?*
- *I haven't been to church in two and a
half years. It's the Jews that have earned
it, not cause of the holocaust or anything.
Jesus was a Jew. You walk out of the
church and so does the preacher and he
forgets the rules just like you. People they
like to stab you in the back and it hurts.
They just want your money.*
- *But you were born Catholic?*
- *I'm a Jew. They came first before the
Catholics.*
- *I don't know. Do you believe in the Holy
Ghost?*
- *How can you believe in something you
can't see?*

Meriden Hill Methodist passing by on the
left.
The man has stopped staring.

- *I'm not asking you to.*
- *Someone is..*

The windows warp everyone's reflection
maybe it really is this way.
It's hard to see out
and who cares what you believe in.

"Buenos Noches," says the spanish women
as she turns and follows her husband out
the rear door.

"Buenos Noches," says the black man as
she passes.

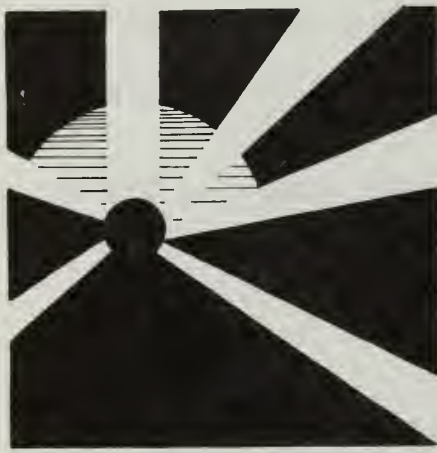
"Et tu Brute?"
This is what I believe in.

"So how did it go?" I ask him. A dancer, he looks worried--don't ever ask dancers how they think anything went; if you do, they get all worried that they've let you down or something. Anyway, this dancer is the same as all the rest. I ask him how his lecture to twenty underprivileged little miracles went and he's looking all nervous because he thinks he's let them down and all.

Finally, he answers, "Well, I'm afraid I frightened them a little. I told them all about how the San Francisco Ballet rehearses, and then we did the duel scene from Romeo and Juliet." The man's face lightens. All he has to do is think about dance, and he doesn't come back to Earth for about a year. I tell you, all those dancers are the same. Then he finishes, "But not one of them asked a single question. They just smiled and left, about five minutes ago."

I have no trouble picturing that. Those schoolchildren spend most of their afternoons on the floor of their families' laundry services and all. To approach the other side of San Francisco with all its freedom and enlightenment for even a few hours, was a big step. I shouldn't have hoped for anything to make a big impression on them right away, least of all anything as foreign as ballet. I'm crazy, I tell you, really crazy.

"But look!" the dancer says, right in my ear. I look. The sun jumps out of the fog. I can see out to Geary Street. And there they are, a long line of elementary little tomorrows. They are dancing all the way.



Within an Unheard Rhythm

Her brown skin seems to flow with her
body
and her arm muscles ripple with each
intricate movement
as the beat of the African drums
reverberates inside the walls of the 5th floor
of the brown-with-orange-shutters
tenant building;
but, it cannot penetrate the thick air
who does not know its
rhythm.

She seeks redemption in the ritual
but cannot find it in her unnatural surroundings,
as in her mirror, she sees not herself but her
image
--- distorted amidst the reflections of a society
whose preconceived misconceptions
drive her on a quest for the consummation of her
emptiness
--- an unattainable goal in an empty society.

She will never find
redemption in her ritual
for the beat she creates will never
be reflected in a mirror.

Sarah Burgess

"Trace, you awake?"

Tammy propped herself up on one elbow on the hard, blanket covered floor. She peered intently at Traci and tried again. "Trace, you awake?" It seemed stupid to whisper when trying to wake someone up, but Tammy could not bring herself to crack the quiet hum of the sleeping house. She wasn't quite sure what time it was. Through the sliding glass doors, Tammy could see the faint smudge of light on the pure gray sky. Tammy jiggled Traci's shoulder lightly and whispered in her ear, "Traci..." Though Traci's eyes were closed, a smile flickered at the corners of her mouth. Tammy poked the shoulder hidden by blankets on the floor next to her. "you jerk, you are awake." Traci's mouth dissolved into a torrent of laughter and they both giggled quietly into their pillows.

"Shhh...my mother will hear us talking and then she'll have a fit." Tammy's face loomed close to Traci's in the dark as she whispered the threat into her ear. They both lay still for a moment in the dark. Tammy turned her head on the pillow and evaluated Traci's profile in the early morning light.

"You have a nice nose. I hate my nose, it's like a witch's nose."

"That's not true, you have a nice nose, too." Traci responded, eager to smother the envy laden conflict which had arisen. Traci smirked. "Matt certainly likes it." Tammy smiled.

"He said hi to me on Friday," she confessed. "He didn't just say hi; he looked right at me and I was walking down the hall with Steve."

"I bet he was jealous," Traci speculated, wise to the emotions of the newly discovered gender. Tammy was silent and stared at the outline of her blanketed body in the dim light.

"He likes Angela."

"He does not! All the guys pretend they like her because..." Traci's voice trailed off in a wake of innuendo. Tammy sighed.

"I know, I know why they like her. She's not that pretty, you know, and you can tell she stuffs from the other side of her room." She sighed again, staring once more at the outline of her body under the blankets. "I have no chest," she murmured in a dramatic voice.

"That's not true," Traci soothed, eager again to bridge the gap which divided them.

"It is, it is true." Traci sighed in a more profoundly mournful way. "I'm going to look like Peter Pan for the rest of my life. Guys don't like girls like that. I'll never have a boyfriend." Traci drew a deep breath.

"Lots of other girls aren't that abig yet and guys like them. Look at Alison."

"Lots of other girls are flat, but they have boyfriends. I'm flat and I have no boyfriend." Tammy rolled her head so that it faced away from Traci and the humiliation of her uncovered insecurity.

"You have nice eyes, though."

"I do not," Tammy lied, hoping that Traci would say it one more time. Traci rose to the call.

"You do, you do have nice eyes and I know Matt likes you because I asked Adrienne who heard Matt's best friend talking to Jeff about it." Tammy turned her face back to Traci and gave a faint smile.

"You think so?" She now felt obligated to return the favor. "Maybe my brother likes you." Traci's head shot up from the pillow in horror as her hand shot out from under the covers. She dug her nail's into Tammy's shoulder with venomous fear.

"SHHH...Be quiet! Let's say he hears you! I'll die!"

"don't be stupid; he's asleep. That's all he ever does is sleep- he won't be hearing anything until at least twelve." Tammy stared at the cratered ceiling and debated bringing up the next point. The gray dawn light washed into a translucent blue. Still, it was dark enough. Her face shielded enough, she gave in.

"I think he smokes, you know, pot" Tammy could feel Traci's eyebrows crimp together in the dark, the way they always did when she heard about something she hadn't yet done. The covers rumbled as Traci turned onto her side assumed her most natural and skeptical voice.

"Really? How do you know?"

"His room always smells of the incense stuff. Plus, when I borrowed one of his records there were all these little dried leaf things along the center. He had a fit when he noticed I had borrowed it."

"Angela does it, you know. So do all the guys who hang out in the front of the school after the buses are

gone." Traci paused and gathered her breath to test out new ground.

"I'd do it if they let me have some--" She glanced sharply over to Tammy to gauge the response.

"you would? I mean, I guess I would too, maybe not until next year, though."

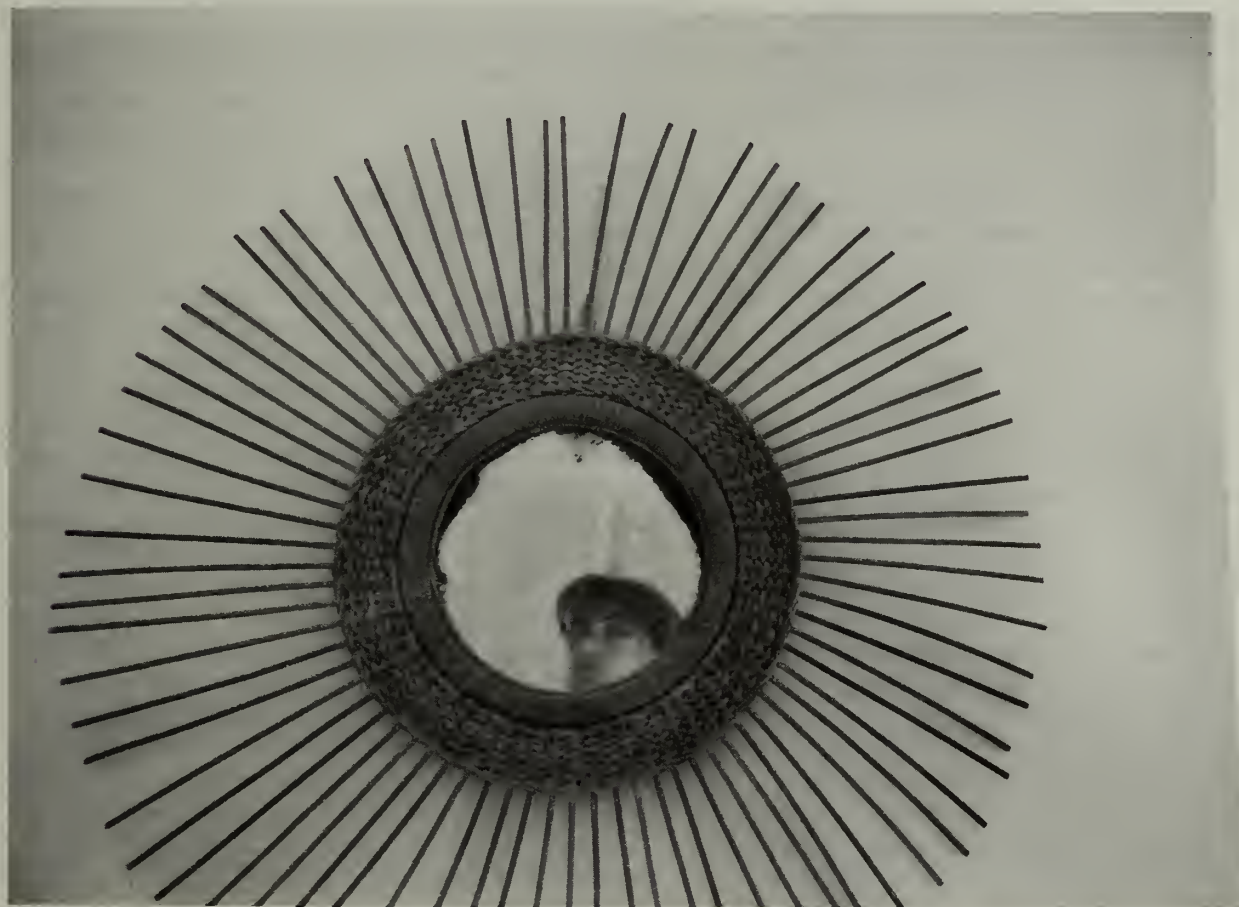
"Yeah, probably not until next year. Everyone says it's all over the place in junior high. Everyone does it. They have it at all the parties..." Traci's voice trailed off. They both buried their heads farther back into their pillows and pondered the unknown possibilities of the new world they were about to enter. The sun had risen higher now, growing larger as it emerged from behind the trees. It glimmered through the pine

trees that surrounded the back lawn. The blue light dissolved in a brighter pale yellow as the sun ripened in preparation for the day. Tammy turned her face to the side and closed her eyes. Traci was still thinking about parties.

"You know, a lot of girls in junior high go out with high school guys..." Tammy opened her mouth slightly and pretended to be asleep. The morning sun unfolded its light into the room, showing the pattern on the sheets and the stitching on the jeans which were crumpled in the corner.

"Tam, are you awake?" Traci whispered. There was too much light to be honest, Tammy decided, and snuggled her face deeper into the pillow.

Photo/Tanya Rulon-Miller



And so right about now I'm looking up. And I see these mirrored squares about four feet a side. I thought you had to go down to the Stuckey's Motel on the strip to see those. I also thought that that kind of stuff went against the sin of vanity or something. About halfway through I look down, and I noticed that there should always be a 3 pointer. How are you gonna deal with those long shots? I spent most of my time in there looking around the court, anyway. I was only disturbed occasionally by the boom of the blue man. I really didn't know what he was saying, but he was saying it too loud. I looked at him, and he was flailing his arms. His dark, fleshy head popped just up next to the microphone on the podium, and he seemed to be glowing a bit. But maybe the glow was just his purplish robe smattered with gold stripes. I could just see those nuns in the back rooms pricking their fingers and getting their migraines trying to get those stripes on. But I'll bet they felt good about it. Oh sure, they're getting all excited because they think they know exactly where they're going after they're dead. Yeah, they're getting their jollies all right. But it's not that I'm not a believer, I am. But I don't believe in another Stuckey's for this town. I don't want soul-sourcing to go into business with my storm door company. The flowing robes, the boom of the blue man's voice, those brilliant gold stripes, they're all really striking. You betcha. Striking like a baseball bat on a three and two count.

I liked the guy, though, in a smug and self-satisfied sense. I guess I liked him because he was short. I'll bet they had to lower the microphone for him. I also knew I could take him in a fight. Not that I wanted to fight him. I didn't. I guess that that's not really important. Anyway, like I says, there's this chick behind me. And she's really sad sack. I'd bet she was about twelve or thirteen and just figuring out what her glands are doing to her. I shot a quick look in back of me, just to see what was going on. Oh brother! She was looking me up and down, smacking her lips and all. She was wearing this cheap, dirty-looking pink skirt and a black sweatshirt studded with these clear rocks. They weren't even good enough to be rhinestones, not even glass. I'll bet her mom got them at the five and dime and glued them on herself. I'm not a snob or anything, but the whole thing, the package for sale here, I mean, wasn't too appetizing. Especially now that she's drooling all over her Buster Browns. And she's got these two earrings on. One says LOVE and the other says GOD. From left to right, it says LOVE GOD, but maybe that's supposed to be GOD LOVE. Anyway, there's also this scraggly looking

boyfriend next to her. Oh man. Oh man, you should have seen this one. What a prize! This one is maybe fourteen, and he's got puberty written all over him. The guy's got hormones dumping into his body evidently faster than he could handle. He's too tall for his clothes and has got more than his fair share of acne. He's right at the point where he doesn't want to shave the thick, black stubble off his chin for fear of ripping the heads off a good number of zits. So, like I says, I'm looking at this kid and all of a sudden it dawns upon this Einstein that his honey is getting all juiced up about me. Oh boy, now I'm in trouble. But I knew I could take him too, so I'm not worried.

And then I get to thinking that there's something in this here. This girl thought I knew her or something. And I don't really mean know her, like "be familiar with her", I guess I mean more of understand her and maybe even love her. Well, more important, she wanted to understand and love me. Maybe she thought I could get her out of that cheap skirt, or maybe I wanted to help her, or give her sorry life some salvation. But I'm no saviour. I don't know the girl, and I don't want to. And anyway, she didn't understand me, and I can tell you she didn't know the first thing about GOD'S LOVE either. She's loving me, kind of like how I'm supposed to be loving the screaming blue man. It's the same way, right there. That blue guy didn't give a damn about me, much less the scagbags in back. What do you think he understands about Hairy-Stubbly-Zitface-Rat worries about and what his fears are and what his doubts are about his own life. Who's going to care for him in this place? Same goes for me and the Rhinestone Cowgirl. Who gives a fiddle about us here? All that guy cared about was getting enough in the collection plate so he can buy himself a new Isuzu or something (Oh, you bet, it's real fair and it's all going to the poor). But neither the guy at the podium or the chick behind me or the oversproutd boyfriend or those nuns in the back rooms sewing on the gold stripes understood. I guess it's not their fault for trying, but, I'm still looking around for three-point line as if some dude in short pants is going to come barreling down trying to tie the game, and this hero is still trying to save me from my sins and thinks he's doing it to boot? That's all I'm saying. It's about me, not the blue guy's new Isuzu. And it sure as heck's not about the mirrored paneling on the ceiling or the glass rocks on the girl's shirt or all that other cheap stuff I was telling you about. It's about me, and it's supposed to be about me. but nobody in this stinking place seems to know it.

So, like I says, I go up to see the star of the show. There's a girl on the left in Spandex exercise pants, and I'm kind of left there not knowing what to think about it. There's another nondescript one picking his teeth getting ready for the meal. Another ordinary guy, another sheep. I didn't know what to expect when I got up there, even though I had been there a thousand times before. I was hoping that the blue man knew that I was having doubts, and that something would be different. But when I got up there, and I looked him in the eye, and he looked at me, and called me "his son", it sliced me right through, and I thought I would fall over. But I turned away, and looked around. I saw the rhinestone girl, and now I smiled. It's not her fault.

So I figure I'm out of luck. There isn't anything for me here. Stuckey's is looking better and better. And on my way out the door, I see this other girl. This one's really cute, all dressed in a pretty cotton skirt. And even though she's a blond and even though she smiles and blows me a kiss, I keep walking out toward the light of the parking lot, because I didn't want here to see me cry.

James McLain

Grapefruit

In the middle of the stage there is a Commons table. Three students are sitting around it. Each of them is reading a book. There is a grapefruit on top of the table.

STUDENT 1: I have to write a paper on this by tomorrow. A thousand fucking words. I don't even have anything vaguely resembling a thesis.

STUDENT 2: Bummer

STUDENT 1: I mean, it's not as if I don't have obscene amounts of homework to do. I have a math test to study for, shitloads of history to do, and this fucking paper to top it all off. I'm going to be up all fucking night and I'll be so tired tomorrow that I'll just wind up sleeping through class.

STUDENT 3: Bummer

STUDENT 1: So, what should I do about a thesis?

STUDENT 3: Umm...why don't you compare the main character to a...grapefruit?

STUDENT 1: Oh be serious! I'm in dire need of help and all you can do is make jokes! That's just great!

STUDENT 3: I am serious! Like a grapefruit is round, right? So just say that this dude, instead of going forward in his life is just going in circles. And because he's going nowhere, he's had to develop a thick skin. The reason he's going nowhere is because he's cowardly - he's yellow, so to speak. And this going nowhere has made him turn sour inside. See?

STUDENT 1: Now wait a minute. If the dude is a grapefruit, what are all his friends?

STUDENT 3: They're all grapefruits too.

Two grapefruits roll on stage

GRAPEFRUIT 1: Death and devils men! It is Moby Dick ye have seen - Moby Dick -Moby Dick!

GRAPEFRUIT 2: Captain Ahab! Captain Ahab, I have heard of Moby Dick-but was it not Moby Dick that took off thy leg?

GRAPEFRUIT 1: Aye, aye! it was that accursed white whale that razed me; made a poor pegging lubber of me for ever and a day! Aye, aye! and I'll chase him round Good Hope and round the Horn and round ...

Student 2 gets up and kicks the grapefruits off stage.

STUDENT 1: So what's Moby Dick then, a grapefruit too?

STUDENT 2: No, he's a pickle!

STUDENT 1: That doesn't make any sense.

STUDENT 3: Yes it does! Don't you see, metaphorically speaking, we're all some kind of fruit or vegetable. I for instance am a great big watermelon - green on the outside, but a totally different color on the inside.

Student 1 turns to student 2. As they talk, student 3 is replaced by a watermelon.

STUDENT 1: What is she talking about? We're all fruits and vegetables? I don't get it.

STUDENT 2: You don't? Well, I, for instance, am, in a metaphysical sense, a pumpkin. Don't you see? It's just so basic and simple.

STUDENT 1: oh shit.

STUDENTS 2 & 3 (voices): Don't you see? It all so simple. We're all fruit and the world is a great big fruit tree. You are a fruit! Just a fruit, that's all you are. Long live the fruit of the world!! Fruit forever!!

STUDENT 1: No! No! You're insane! I don't believe you, you're just fucking with my mind! I'm not a fruit - I'm not!

Student 1 grabs a nearby sledgehammer and smashes the watermelon and the pumpkin repeatedly until they are just pulp (screaming "no" with each blow).

STUDENT 1: I am no fruit.

Lights fade.



To me, it was like clots of milk floating up in water--the way all of fingernails of the whip girl looked. They also looked to me to be each of them trimmed down close to those places on each of the ends of her fingers where the fingernails of the whip girl rooted her finger-end skin. The whip girl trimmed all of them that way but the one of them which was the nail on the one finger of hers that she left long and that she filed to a point and that she laquered to be hard, almost as if the whip girl wanted to use that one fingernail in particular of hers to open up a letter.

I saw why it was that her fingernails were milk-dotted and why it was that she cut her fingernails short enough for her to fist-ball her fingers as both being because of the same reason. I put it all down to what the whip girl told me she had done--despoiling the bodies of the cousin-killers whom the whip girl told me she had left down on their backs, knocked there by the lash of her steel whip.

I found out, in the case of the pigtail girl, that the pigtail girl was also someone's cousin. When I actually got to see the cousin of the pigtail girl--at the same time, me getting to see truly how tall the cousin of the pigtail girl was--I could not figure how that cousin had grown so, when, all along, the pigtail girl herself looked as if she was from a mother and a father that wanted to keep everything they made shorter than they were. When I looked at the pigtail girl, I imagined how she might not even be tall enough to lift her chest over the tray for putting chalk in at the bottom of the blackboard. I also imagined that all of the pigtail girl could weigh no more than my leg or my shoulder, because, when I looked at her, that was how small the pigtail girl looked.

But then there was one time when I looked at her when the pigtail girl sat down and painted her fingernails Double Joy red and came over to me, shaking a finger at me, and I was watching that swinging stop-light shine on that fingernail of that finger of hers.

"My cousin is going to get a gun and come fuck your shit up," the pigtail girl stared at me and said.

There was a boy who called me Gregor.

Someone sat in the seat that was the one between my seat and the seat that the boy who called me Gregor sat in. The boy who called me Gregor carried a big head on top of his shoulders, which were close

together and which did not go far, it looked to me like, toward putting any kind of a space between the boney front of his chest and the hard braid of his spine. His head was really something, though--like a blow from a hammer might not be enough to break it; I think that, to the boy who called me Gregor, his head was just a thing that he could use to make sure that his ways to make brush-strokes stayed safe up in there in his head, or maybe written out in there, all of those ways of his for writing written out, on the inside of the boy who called me Gregor's brain.

The boy who called me Gregor mostly sat and used his brush over there, a seat and a person away from me. Once in a while, though, the boy would make his neck longer and at the same time turn his head so that, with his eyes in that big-looking head, he would be looking around the person sitting between us, looking at me. When the boy looked over at me like that, he would ask me what I was doing over where I was, sitting in that seat of mine. There were also times when I wanted him to tell me the answer to things, and that was when the boy who called me Gregor would jump out of his seat over to where I was in my seat and would put his face on my arm so that I could feel the breath that he breathed out breathed on my arm.

"Gregor," the boy once whispered, "starting now, one time each week, my father will put me in a truck to get a melon for me to sell--twenty-five cents a piece for the melons, Gregor."

The boy who called me Gregor once said to me that his mother and his father had brought him all the way over the ocean over to here, all of the way from the pirate coast in the south of the place that the boy's mother had given birth to him in. But beyond telling me where it was that his mother and his father came from, the boy who called me Gregor did not want to talk about his mother and his father. That boy only wanted to tell me about the place that all three of them had come out of their mothers in.

For one thing, the boy wanted me to know the way the place would sound each spring to me when the people there all took cooking pots and cooking buckets and cooking ladles and cooking tubs and filled them all up to the brimming point with water and then threw all of the water all on one another, all of them there on the pirate coast--all of the people there getting all wet all at once.

The whip girl had her long sharp one in the corner

of her mouth, pressing on her lip, turning her lip out, letting me see the inside of her while she told me about the events that had happened to her and about the events that had happened as far as she knew, to her uncle, who, the whip girl said, had been the one who had taught her to steel-whip, so that she would be safe after coming over here to this place.

"My cousin, when he got here," the girl said, "some people came after him who were not from a group. So when I got here, I went after them and took their pants down. I left some marks on them," she said, "I did."

The whip girl showed me the keys and the socks of those people whom she had whipped—which were the things that had belonged to those people that she had kept for herself. There were socks, which were thin and blue-colored and which had bright pink pinstripes. The whip girl moved the hand of hers that had the one finger with the one long one on it through the spoils as if the spoils were the water and she was stirring a bath.

"If you can't handle him by yourself—if you want me to tell my other cousin, then I could," she said. "Then he could tell him for your sake that his head will blow up," she said.

"Fuck off," the pigtail girl cooed at us.

I crossed the ocean back with the sun, and walked around in the city that the whip girl had grown up in. The city had a place called the Upper Corner and a place called the Lower Corner.

I walked through the breadth of it—both the corners and the suburbs—the whole of the whole city. One end of the place was the place that was the beginning of my walk, and the opposite other end was the place that was the end of my walk, the situs where I went to sleep on the road. I began walking just before the sun went down, and I did not get to the end of my walk until I was seeing the sun again. When I was where I was when I was done, my legs were the way they feel when you put pins in to heal them and twist. That was why I walked through half that city walking bent over as if I was looking for a key that I might have dropped on the road.

On my way through the corners, I saw them sleeping in chairs, sitting in the streets. Some of them sat on stools which looked to me like dog-big bamboo spiders.

I believe I had chosen the sitters who were women to ask where I was because I kept thinking of a steel-whipping uncle in each of the men. I remember I walked up behind two of them who were two old women sitting on stools.

"Aunties!" I growled.

Then, later, a sitter grabbed my hand.

"Nephew," she said, "speak English."

Rainbow Mouth Park, the whip girl said, was the place in the city where she had lived with her uncle.

"My cousin is very arrogant. He is beset with mischief. He would come to my uncle's house in the park and drink all the soda and eat all the dumplings in the house," the whip girl said.

Then the whip girl said to me how she, too, was beset with mischief, and if her uncle were here instead of back one day-turn toward morning away in Rainbow Mouth Park, then she would tell him to his face.

"I would steel-whip his ass off," the whip girl said.

That was the time when I watched the whip girl playing with the zipper on her jacket, pulling the zipper fast all the way down and up the front of her jacket over and over again, each time the zipper going down or going up, it sending out that noise that someone with a metal saw sends out when he takes his saw and takes his test strokes. Each time the whip girl pulled her zipper down, both sides of the part of the jacket which was above the zipper opened out in the shape of an arrowhead, and I was left watching for the time that the zipper was down and not yet pulled back up.

Later, I watched her button the snaps at the sleeve cuffs of the jacket covering up her wrists. The whip girl slung her purse strap over her shoulder, and hooked her thumb in the waistband of her trousers.

"You like melon?" the whip girl asked.

The boy who called me Gregor hung himself on her. The boy was gripping a writing brush in one hand and a practice book in the other.

The whip girl pulled her thumb out of the waistband of her trousers and used both of her hands to pick the boy up. The girl's fingers were, it looked to me, like the legs of the sea spider.

That was the one time when it was that I wanted to be the boy who called me Gregor and to get caught by her as if I was getting caught by something that went swimming with me in the Southern Ocean.

I heard her say, "Okay, now this my baby."

There was a fat man who was the only one of them who, it seemed to me, made brush strokes as if he really knew how to make them, besides the boy who called me Gregor, who did nothing mostly besides doing just that. But the fat man did everything.

"Boy," the fat man said. The fat man was talking to the boy who called me Gregor, calling the boy over to him to take a pin, to put it in the head of the boy who called me Gregor, to put it in and to twist.

The fat man lived in the back of the store that he sold his things out of. And the store was full up, because in it the fat man had everything he was going to sell, and the fat man was selling everything--The One Hundred Goods, The Four Necessities, The Sea of Ten Thousand Sciences, The Complete Book, The Old Books, The Crafty Pins, The Moxibustion Classic, and The Iron Man Balls.

The fat man was even selling what I was buying, which was the chance to sit in the back with them and to learn with them what they had left back in wherever it was that they, each of them, had come from, when their mothers and their fathers had taken them over the ocean to here.

There was the time that I was looking through The Four Necessities and saw the practice book.

It was made out of tissue-soft paper that was nearer the vegetable state than any other paper I have seen. It was the color that you would get if you could turn a tree into dust and hang it in water. Each page of the practice book was folded double, so that you could put a practice card into the space formed from the two folded sides of the paper. Then, after you had a practice card in there in its place, you could trace over it with your brush to practice the ways to make the strokes.

The boy who called me Gregor was using his practice book, which was what that boy was always doing when I could see him.

Later, he put his face next to mine, very close. "You know," he whispered, "the fat man told me, from where we were in the South, they have a steel brush with a steel cap, and when you are done using it, you

put the ink in the cap, and that keeps the brush wet all the time, so the hairs can never dry wrong and not be pointed."

The whip girl walked by in front of me, her legs in tight black trousers touching together lightly with each step, the trousers-on-trousers sound like the sound of the steel wheel getting spun with its toothed edge ticking off against the peg of flint in the lighter.

The fat man left behind clean strokes in the practice book that looked to me as if they were strokes that could not be argued with. The fat man would keep his brawny wrist fixed, driven against the desk top, and would cut the brush over the paper using only his fingers. Sometimes I saw that that man did not even look at what he was writing on those soft pages. Sometimes I saw that he did not even use the practice cards, but that he must have been writing only from his memory of how he must have thought the strokes ought to look when they were all down there together.

I saw the whip girl had walked over to where the fat man was sitting making his brush strokes. The fat man moved in his seat to make a part of the seat that he would not be sitting on. The pigtail girl sang: Tuna-tunya, tuna-tunya, I love tuna.

The fat man hummed: Girl, girl, do not be angry. I sit on a chair, you sit on the floor. I eat melon, you eat meat.

Then I saw that the whip girl was not sitting anymore on the part of the chair that the legs of the fat man were not on, but had moved over and was sitting on one of the fat man's legs.

"Aunties!" I growled, "show me the way to take to the opposite other side."

The ones I asked said that first I would have to find my way to Rainbow Mouth Park. Follow Four Rivers North Road for a while, the sitters said.

Gold hair, small ghost, they said.

After I walked a little way off from the women, I squatted and shook my head to knock the sweat off.

It was nighttime when I saw it. Great floodlights were aimed down into the park, the salt-flake white light coming through the trees. I walked with my eyes on the floodlights. The panels gave a bright crystal glare and drew out bandy-looking ink shadows from tree branches, and drew out shadows

shaped like horse ears from tree leaves on the dirt ground, on the concrete path. I could feel during the times when I walked between the lines and the bars of the shadows that the light was beating on my face.

After I had come through the stand of white-lit trees on to the midnight street, I stood on the road with a man who sold One Hundred Delight Snack. I bought kumquat soda.

Yah, yah, I give you cold.

Cold I have. Ice for keep cold.

Melon if you want, westmelon.

I watched a very tall boy pick up the boy who called me Gregor by the hair.

The tall boy fist-balled his hand.

I remember watching the lay of his shoulder.

I remember that I pulled him closer in to me by his shirt the whole time the tall boy was hitting me just under the lip on the chin.

The cousin of the tall boy asked me if I wanted to play Mahs or Dots. I pulled her pigtail. I told her one pull meant Mahs, two pulls meant Dots. I pulled her head back over the back of her chair by her pigtail so that her throat was bowed out, and I gripped her by her throat and said: "Marry me."

"How much you think I make, Gregor?" the boy asked me.

She tapped him with her long sharp one. "Honey, when you're in a group for life, they pay you five hundred sometimes per week,"

The whip girl said. "Don't talk to me about the

fruit business."

The fat man whispered in my ear, "You can have her."

When I was going, the fat man gave me pins, practice cards, brushes, man root—"You needn't pay," the fat man said.

The tall boy who had picked up the boy who called me Gregor by the hair met me in the street. He was wearing a new shirt. I saw that the shirt was a turquoise one with no sleeves. I could see the arms of the tall boy all the way up to the tall boy's shoulders. The tall boy was wearing white trousers over his curved legs and black plastic-looking shoes on his feet. I saw the sunlight light him up--all the way from up on the tall boy to all the way down.

"Where are you going?" the tall boy said.

"What?" the tall boy said.

"Where did you say you were going?" the tall boy said.

"Give me that again," the tall boy said.

"Tell me, how is your face doing?" the tall boy said.

The east morning sun wested around the shoulder of the tall boy and shot a light-arrow into my eye. When I walked away from the place where the tall boy had put out his hand to shake hands with me for peace at last, I looked and saw that there was a scimitar of it in the air, the body-big white star of the reflected sun in the window of the fat man's place. I saw it as a great gout of firing white water in a window glass sending out the lash of a dotted blinding milk.

View from '92

The Mirror presents View from '92, writing selections from the junior class.



Journey

The river gently flowed upstream,
The sun was setting in the east.
And everything was upside-down,
Because, you see, I was deceased.

Quite calmly walking on my head,
I saw the daisies eye to eye.
They didn't know that I was dead;
They stretched their roots up to the sky.

I hoped to get there sometime soon,
Because the sky was growing black.
But in the west there rose a moon,
To light my road while coming back.

My whole entire life was spent
Opposing always mankind's ways;
So to the backwards world I went,
There to live out my backward days.

So now the sun sets in the east,
And rivers always flow upstream;
I'm backwards now, when long deceased,
And life on earth is just a dream.

View from '92

The Spectre

Be very, very quiet as you approach my door.

Unlock the door as softly as possible.

Open the door as slowly as you can.

Stick your head in.

Did you hear it?

Do you hear the spectre?

No, of course not. You can't really hear it during the day, much less see it. It hides in the shadows. It festers in the cracks and crevices. It lingers in the unseen places.

But it's there.

The best time to hear it is at night. Night, when a full bright moon silently shines down on misty fields of well-worn grass. Night, when the activities of the day end and the fantasies of the night take over. Night, when the mind becomes malleable and soft.

It sings to you at night.

The song is soft at first, so soft that it doesn't interfere with your other thoughts. But slowly, slowly it insinuates its way into your mind, until every fibre of your being is awash with its siren cry:

"Come back to us! Come back to our grassy fields, our friendly neighborhoods, our familiar sights. Come back to your old friends, who know and love you. Come back to our schools, where your brilliant mind dominates all others. Come back to your home, where your room and all your belongings wait for you. Come back to your parents, who love and miss you. Leave this place of unfriendly people, of unfamiliar places, of hard classes. Come back to your bed, your home, your love. Come home."

Soon your eyes are filled with visions of old friends, of good times, of your comfortable room. You see your old school with absolute clarity. Soon every part of you aches for home.

For most, the spectre is but a nuisance, a night pest to be eluded by willpower and constant reminders of the merits of Phillips Academy. But for the weak, every night is agony. They cry back to the spectre, They swear they will do all in their power to return home. They vow to pack their belongings, buy a plane ticket, and return to a home so much more appealing than it was when it was exited.

But then comes sleep, and with it a new morning. The weak ones grasp wildly for the spectre, but his beconing cries and encouraging songs have retreated under the bed, in the closet. In its place is the promise and potential of a new day. Fortified by this, the weak ones press on to begin the day.

I, too, am haunted by the spectre; everyone at Phillips Academy is. I chose to be haunted by the spectre; had I not, I would be haunted by a different shade -- the spectre of guilt and weakness. The spectre of a life that could have been.

Even as I write this, I see the spectre peering over my shoulder, crooning his song of false hopes, of an old, discarded, yet all too familiar and loving world. And somewhere, I know, the weak ones listen.



No One Hears Now

The wind blew,
The sun was blackened,
No one could see yonder,
They were all disabled,
I frowned,
Wondering who won.
We said us,
They said them,
I say no one.
The devil got the best of us.
But why?
What happened?
Radio, Television,
All warning,
That monotone sound.
People heard then,
No one hears now.

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